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**Education Committee**

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**HB 2706**

**Brief Description:** Regarding a more rigorous curriculum for high school graduation.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Hunter, Sommers, Tom, Anderson, Talcott, Quall, McIntire, Dunn, Green, Kenney and Lantz.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Establishes a recommended high school program that includes four credits of English and math; three of science and social studies; and four in an academic or career and technical concentration.
- Requires students to enroll in the recommended program unless they are exempted with written parental permission.
- Directs the Higher Education Coordinating Board to recommend when the program should be included in minimum admissions standards for public four-year colleges and universities.

**Hearing Date:** 1/26/06

**Staff:** Barbara McLain (786-7383).

**Background:**

The State Board of Education (SBE) is charged with adopting statewide high school graduation requirements. The current SBE rules require a student to accumulate 19 credits in the following course content areas:

- English - 3 credits
- Math - 2 credits
- Science - 2 credits, including 1 credit of laboratory science
- Social Studies - 2.5 credits
- Health and Fitness - 2 credits
- Arts (visual or performing) - 1 credit
- Occupational Education - 1 credits
- Electives - 5.5 credits

These minimum graduation requirements are not the same as minimum admissions standards adopted by the Higher Education Coordinating Board for four-year public colleges and universities. Local school districts can adopt additional courses or other requirements.

A number of national organizations, including the American Diploma Project (ADP) and the National Governor's Association, have recommended that states encourage higher standards for high school graduation. The ADP recommends that all students be required to take a college and workplace readiness curriculum that is defined by specific, challenging core content. The High Schools That Work consortium, a reform initiative from the Southeast Regional Education Board, recommends that in addition to four years of English and mathematics, all students enroll in a four credit academic or vocational concentration.

At least three states working with the ADP (Texas, Indiana, and Arkansas) have adopted new high school graduation requirements that are aligned with college entrance standards. Students have the option of enrolling in a lesser series of courses only with parental permission.

### **Summary of Bill:**

High school graduation requirements set by the SBE are minimum requirements. Beginning with the class of students entering ninth grade in 2008-09, school districts must offer the following recommended high school program:

- English - 4 credits, with the content and standards of college-preparatory English that emphasize reading, writing, and presentation skills;
- Math - 4 credits, including Algebra II, Geometry, and a higher-level course to prepare students for postsecondary studies without remediation;
- Science - 3 credits that include laboratory experience in biology, chemistry, physics or applied physics, or anatomy/physiology;
- Social Studies - 3 credits that emphasize reading and writing;
- Computers - .5 credit or demonstrated proficiency in computer technology beyond keyboarding; and
- Concentration - 4 credits in an academic or career and technical concentration where the student chooses electives in a coherent sequence based on the student's aspirations.

Students who complete the recommended program must also complete any SBE or district requirements that exceed the program to earn a diploma.

Students must enroll in the recommended program unless a parent or guardian makes a written request for an exemption. In addition to the written request, a school district can require the parent or guardian to meet with school staff. Students with disabilities are exempt unless the recommended program is part of their individualized education program. Students who are exempt must complete the minimum SBE graduation requirements plus any local requirements to receive a diploma.

By December 1, 2006, the Higher Education Coordinating Board must review minimum admission standards for four-year colleges and universities and recommend when the standards should include completion of the recommended high school program.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.